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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 001610

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/26/2014

TAGS: PREL PHUM PGOV MV

SUBJECT: MALDIVES: AMBASSADOR WILL STRESS NEED FOR REFORM
IN UPCOMING VISIT

REF: A. COLOMBO 1549

B. COLOMBO 1568

C. COLOMBO 1582

Classified By: AMB. JEFFREY J. LUNSTEAD. REASON: 1.5 (B,D).

¶1. (SBU) The Ambassador plans to travel to Maldives October 6-7. He has requested appointments with President Gayoom, Foreign Minister Jameel, Defense Minister Shafeeu, Home Affairs Minister Zahir, Foreign Secretary Zakariyya, and Attorney General Saeed. In addition, the Ambassador plans to meet with the head of the Human Rights Commission and some of the Members of the Special Majlis who remain detained under the State of Emergency.

¶2. (C) In his conversations with Government of the Republic of Maldives (GORM) officials, particularly President Gayoom, the Ambassador proposes to make the following points:

--U.S. values its friendship with Maldives and supports genuine efforts toward political reform.

--The desire for reform among Maldivians is genuine and broad-based. Attempting to stifle this desire will push the demand for change in a negative direction, strengthening the appeal of fundamentalists who will be viewed as the only option, particularly among disaffected youth.

--Ordinary Maldivians, as well as the international community, expect the President to substantiate the commitment to reform he announced last June. The USG hopes to help the GORM meet those commitments.

--The U.S. remains concerned at the prolonged State of Emergency and the potential damage that continued suspension of citizens' fundamental rights can cause to GORM credibility.

--In particular, we are concerned for the detainees' welfare and right to due process under the law.

¶3. (C) Comment: This visit follows closely upon the DCM's September 19-20 visit (Ref C) and, perhaps, a proposed meeting on October 1 between the Maldivian Foreign Minister Jameel and Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs Rocca in Washington (Ref B). These successive high-level meetings should make plain to the GORM that our initial concern at the situation in Maldives, conveyed in the Deputy Secretary's September 1 meeting with the Maldivian PermRep, has not flagged. According to GORM officials, President Gayoom considers the U.S. a friendly country--friendlier than the EU (Ref A)--and thus seems to believe we will accept uncritically his government's allegations of anti-American fundamentalism within the pro-reform camp. As a friendly country, we need to make sure that the GORM does not mistakenly believe that simply raising unsubstantiated allegations of "fundamentalism" against reformers will be sufficient to dispel valid concerns about the detainees' welfare, right to due process, and what their indefinite detention without charge means for the prospect of real reform in Maldives.

LUNSTEAD